

1. Filming Narratives Becoming Events: Documentary and the ‘Emplotments’ of the Carnation Revolution

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This chapter analyses the ways in which documentary film engaged with the 1974-75 Carnation Revolution in Portugal through both the direct involvement of filmmakers in the events and in more recent efforts to critically revisit the militant images shot at the time. Whereas the former has led to the creation of important documents for the history of this political event and of the forms of activism (political and aesthetic) that pervaded it, the latter constitute good opportunities to question the role of documentary film in the social memory of the revolution. These films go well beyond a mere representation, or commentary, of the event. In fact, they contribute to the event’s ‘emplotment’, a concept Hayden White (1987) uses to ground historical knowledge in narrative forms, thus establishing a close relationship not only between historiography and literature, but also between all kinds of fictional and non-fictional narratives. In this sense, the chapter’s main argument will be that even in self-reflective films as the ones we will be discussing, the ways in which the event presented itself dramatically had a decisive impact in the forms films dramatized the Revolution by giving it a plot. In other words, even when filmmakers positioned themselves critically in relation to the revolutionary process, the latter’s development played a constitutive role in the final structure of the narratives. But before discussing these films and their impact on history and memory, it is useful to discuss how complex the Carnation Revolution really was, in order to then be able to assess how its complexity represented a challenge to both historical and filmic narratives.

The narratives of the Carnation Revolution: an introduction

The military coup of 25 April 1974 was highly unexpected. Not only did the regime seem to have been taken by surprise, the people came out to the streets not knowing what to anticipate. As soon as the movement of the captains (*Movimento das Forças Armadas*, from here on, MFA) made public its very limited programme – the end of the dictatorship and of the colonial wars in Africa – a bond was immediately established among improbable allies: the soldiers and the crowd, as well as several political forces which, in normal circumstances, would stand in opposition to each other. In this atmosphere, during the first couple of months after the coup, the country

experienced what many describe as a honeymoon period: a consensus over the end of 48 years of authoritarianism and 13 years of war. Political activity was intense, but the spirit was celebratory and fraternal.

Over the summer, however, the mood started to change. The captains' minimal programme started to be perceived as too broad, and the initial consensus hid important disagreements over key aspects of the process. Gradually, two political lines, clearly defined against each other, started to form: the designated president, general Spínola, and his military and political entourage, on the one hand, and the MFA, on the other. At stake was the issue of decolonization and the different solutions to be found after the cease-fire in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. Whereas the captains seemed, in their majority, to favour the full independence of the colonies, the old general championed a transcontinental federation, or what he envisaged as a Portuguese-speaking Commonwealth. The revolution, in this initial context, had two heads and two voices.

This mounting tension would come to a closure on 28 September 1974: the president precipitated the confrontation by calling a demonstration in Lisbon with what he defined as the 'silent majority' of the Portuguese population – an initiative the MFA took as a covered counter-coup, blocking the access to the capital, and forcing Spínola to resign and leave the country. From then on, the general would continue to act as a hidden player, conspiring from the outside.

Meanwhile, the political situation was becoming more complex, as economic and social issues would soon add to the colonial question as sites of struggle. At the same time, however, the ideologies in contention were becoming better defined. From a contention between a conservative general and a group of inexperienced young captains – both with hidden and/or undetermined political agendas – the split was now, and increasingly so, between communists and their model of socialism, on the one hand, and social-democrats (even if these called themselves socialists too) in favour of Europeanization and parliamentary democracy, on the other.

The second important moment of clarification came, once again, as the result of a period of mounting tension and by the hand of general Spínola: on 11 March 1975, 'Spínolist' parachutists flew over Lisbon and tried to topple the revolutionary government. The coup was however soon dismantled and more radical groups involved in the process, including the Communist Party and the most 'progressive' members of the MFA, gained the upper hand. Only a few days after these events, the

banks and other key sectors of the economy were nationalized and the country semi-officially started a path towards socialism. It was the beginning of PREC, the *processo revolucionário em curso* (literally translated as the ‘ongoing revolutionary process’). Meanwhile, the MFA had committed itself to elections to the constituent assembly, symbolically scheduled for 25 April 1975 – the first anniversary of the revolution. The victory of the moderate forces (socialists and popular democrats) over the communists and the far left, however, complicated the situation further. Not only was the revolution divided between two opposing legitimacies – the majority in parliament and the government of General Vasco Gonçalves, close to the Communist Party – but also, and even more dramatically, those same divisions were projected onto the MFA, which, from then on, became a broken army.

This was the situation during the ‘Hot Summer’ of 1975. While, in Africa, new countries started celebrating their independence (Mozambique in June, Angola in November), Portugal was in turmoil: in parallel with mounting tension on the streets, the occupation of houses, land estates and factories, contention between reformist social democrats and revolutionary communists spread from parties to the government and split the MFA into two increasingly incompatible sides. Events succeeded vertiginously and the order of political institutions was challenged to the limit, sometimes with dangerous consequences, other times leading to bizarre events: the siege of parliament by construction workers is a good example, as are the episodes in which the government went on strike or decided to bomb the transmitter of a Catholic radio broadcaster, which was occupied by workers.

The country seemed on the verge of civil war and, in fact, events precipitated on 25 November 1975. In what remains a very confusing episode, an act of provocation by the conservative forces of the MFA led some radical officers to occupy strategic targets in Lisbon. The conservatives, well prepared, as if waiting for the first opportunity, responded vigorously. The radicals, weakened by the decision of the Communist Party not to intervene (or allow its units to do so), were easily dismantled. Meanwhile, on TV, a leading figure of the moderate MFA, Ernesto Melo Antunes, declared the Communist Party ‘fundamental’ to the future of Portuguese democracy. This was a compromise that, by removing the most radical officers (and their socialist project) paved the way for parliamentary democracy, including the communists in the new regime and thus avoiding what would probably become a civil war.

It could be argued that the most relevant aspect of the narrative I have just told is the way in which it struggles with both the frenetic succession of *events* and the multiplicity of *protagonists* involved. What I have presented so far is an effort to reproduce the most familiar, although not necessarily neutral, account of the PREC (cf. Rezola 2007). The weight given to some episodes and characters or the terminology used may differ whether one adopts a more reformist or a more revolutionary perspective. What I mean by a familiar account of the PREC, however, does not depend on political interpretation, but rather on its historical meaning. What is familiar, then, is this idea that the revolution was frantic, exhilarating or frightening, but always somehow excessive. Frenzy, or excess, is thus what makes the narrative so challenging, with so many protagonists and episodes populating one single plot. Among the protagonists we find: Spínola and his nemesis, Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, as well as the other key officers involved, president Costa Gomes, prime-ministers Vasco Gonçalves and Pinheiro de Azevedo, well known members of the MFA like Melo Antunes, not to mention all the politicians representing the most important political forces, like the communist and socialist leaders Álvaro Cunhal and Mário Soares. And then, the dates and events: 25 April 1974, 28 September 1974, 11 March 1975, 25 April 1975, the ‘Hot Summer’ of 1975 and 25 November 1975.

And yet, despite this proliferation of figures and events and the narrative challenges they pose, one may wonder what this same narrative would look like without them. For it may actually be the case that these people and what they represent, these moments and what they mean, work as a metonymy for much broader phenomena; they are narrative crutches that allow us to make some sense of the very complex whole that is the Carnation Revolution. In other words, despite the hectic narrative they compose, these names and dates may hide an even bigger multiplicity of events and protagonists. With all its profusion of facts, my initial narrative may, after all, be seen as a simplification. For successive generations of Portuguese people, this simplification was mainly experienced through the broadcast of brief five-minute summaries encapsulating the whole of the revolutionary process, year after year, on national TV on the occasion of the anniversary of the 25 April. The journalistic rhythm imposed on the short piece, just as the short narrative summarizing the whole revolution, necessarily selects one dimension and leaves out other important aspects of the historical event. It is not only that a proper articulation of the process would require a slower pace, but also that given the historical specificity of the PREC, the

confinement of its history to a linear narrative is in itself a choice that leaves out important elements. In other words, more than a narrative with more names and dates (or other names and dates), a proper narrative of the Carnation Revolution would probably have to stand without identifiable particular events and individual protagonists altogether.

This is my key argument: as a restricted aspect of the PREC, the political and military *protagonists* and the important dates are truly just the tip of the iceberg of something much more intense and widely participated. I am of course referring to the vast grassroots activism that is usually ignored, or only very superficially mentioned in the histories of the revolution, starting with my own initial narrative: the mounting tension on the streets, the occupation of houses, land and factories, that is, the generalized challenge to private property and capitalism that made such an impression on those who witnessed the revolution at the time.¹ The PREC, from this perspective, would be less the institutional process of politicians and militaries and political turning points, and more of a massive and constant collective participation, impossible to quantify and with no distinctive protagonists; forms of activism unfolding in the everyday, with no easily identifiable chronological markers or breaks. More than a question of numbers or even rhythm, what historical narratives find difficult to come to terms with, is the account of the depth and intensity of such a sudden transformation in Portuguese society. Depth and intensity, here, can only be truly measured against its own historical background, that of a country that seemed lost to twentieth-century history and of a society perceived as immobile. To put it very bluntly, the PREC seems to require a narrative-shock enabling us to tell the history of a social eruption that tried to carry out in only 18 months political transformations that had been on hold for 48 years (which also brings us back to the ways in which the dramatic presentation of the event constituted a challenge to filmmakers and other narrators, as mentioned in the introduction).

I am aware of how schematic this temporal quantification is. Chronologically, 48 years and 18 months are of course incommensurable. And yet, in terms of the narrative, one is entitled to ask what impact a five-minute TV summary, or a brief written introduction such as this one, has on the historical perception of an event as participated and as intense as the PREC. To start with, it necessarily dramatizes it, as my initial pages demonstrate. It is often said that the revolution resembled a film. It was, in fact, the object of many spectacular films (see Costa 2002): it had a plot filled

with sudden shifts and uncertain outcomes; protagonists, both heroes and anti-heroes; dramatic settings; moments of humour; violence and emotion. But what we should be asking is whether the PREC was filmic because it had drama, plot or protagonists, or because drama, plot and protagonists were the easiest forms film found to narrate the PREC. The answer is both. The documentary films narrating the revolution would not have been able to become the figuration of this event if the elements of the narrative were not somehow in the actual event in the first place. Conversely, however, we are entitled to suspect that what became the dominant narrative representing the revolution, and thus the ways in which the latter was historicized and appropriated by social memory, was precisely the combination of those aspects of the event that lend themselves more effectively to filmic representation: dramatic events and protagonists.

In what follows, we will start by discussing two recent documentary films that try to grasp some of the challenges posed to filmmakers in 1974-75, before moving, in the last section, to a close analysis of two of the most relevant films made during that period.

Scenes from the class struggle in Portugal

José Filipe Costa critiques these filmic narratives in his meta-documentary *Linha Vermelha/Red Line* (2012), where the impact and making of Thomas Harlan's *Torre Bela* (1977), one of the most emblematic films ever made about the PREC, are closely analysed (see Baptista 2015). In *Red Line*, Costa explores the twofold relationship between revolutionary events and militant cinema – a good example of the PREC as a historical challenge to filmmakers and, simultaneously, their films as a historical 'emplotment' (White 1987) of the PREC – by looking in detail at the ways in which Harlan, filming a very specific episode (a case study, one might say: the occupation of a large aristocratic landed-estate by peasants and the following creation of a cooperative) interfered in the course of events by triggering actions, inventing protagonists and thus dramatizing the whole story of the occupation. Harlan's problem – the specific challenge posed to his film by the form of the event – was to do with the routines of the cooperative: in between the more dramatic, but infrequent, moments of actual occupation, discussions, assemblies, etc., not much happened. As such, what went on in the estate during the occupation – the repetitive, dull, tasks of rural life – did not constitute the matter of a good plot.

Costa does all he can to emphasize the distance between his own film and Harlan's, not only by *historicizing* it – namely by confronting the utopian drive behind the occupation with an utterly apolitical present – but especially by disclosing the procedures of his own work in research, shooting and editing: the voiceover directly addresses the figure of Harlan, the presence of *Red Line*'s camera (and microphone) is given away more than once, and the editing table and both films' reels are allowed to become protagonists in their own right (see Figure 1.1).

What Costa is most concerned with, however, is the deconstruction of Harlan's own work procedures and *ethos*. It is particularly interesting to notice how *Red Line*'s reflexivity contrasts with the transparent relation Thomas Harlan tried to establish between *Torre Bela*, the film, and the occupation of the eponymous property. In this sense, Costa unveils how Wilson, one of the squatters, was chosen as the film's protagonist. He also exposes the staged character of a very dramatic sequence that would eventually become decisive to the film's international recognition, and is reminiscent of Luis Buñuel's *Viridiana* (1961), when the members of the cooperative enter the manor house and 'discover' the luxurious lifestyle of their former employers.

All the narrative categories used by Costa in his deconstruction work seem more suitable to fiction. In *Red Line*, we can see *Torre Bela*'s film editor Roberto Perpignani speaking of the 'rhetoric' and the 'acting' of Wilson, whereas Wilson himself confesses his life dream of becoming an actor (an aspiration cherished by Harlan, who had recognized his talent in front of a camera). The occupation of the house, on the other hand, is analysed in *Red Line* through its *mise-en-scène* and the *manipulative* effect of the camera within the event. And yet, in an article that can be read as a supplement to the film, Costa's argument becomes more nuanced.

The article's title, 'When Cinema Forges the Event', does not in fact do justice to the subtlety with which Costa proceeds with the re-evaluation of *Torre Bela* as a staged film, allowing the isolated event to become part of a wider struggle in the context of the Portuguese Revolution. What Harlan does, then, with his 'manipulation' is to endow what was already an event pervaded by speech and narrative with a filmic articulation. As Costa puts it: 'Harlan has suggested that his film is woven around language as it is conquered and seized by a group of people who, in so doing, create new relations of power and sociability to cement a new

community' (2011: 107). *Torre Bela*'s interference, in this context, ceases to be an external imposition on the event, to become a sort of collaboration, exposing but also giving visibility to the 'difficulties and dissonances [at work in the event] without these being domesticated and integrated in a framework of linear political interpretation' (Costa 2011: 111). In short, the singularity of the occupation of Torre Bela allowed Thomas Harlan to get involved in the event, while his camera, more than a protagonist in the occupation, was what allowed squatters to 'communicate' their struggle beyond the landed-estate, to the rest of the Portuguese revolutionary process and ultimately to the broader history of class struggle.

In the same article, Costa uses this proximity to draw a distinction between *Torre Bela* and other documentary films of the Carnation Revolution where, rather than the focus on a specific episode or the close involvement with an event, what we are given is a pre-established narrative (what Costa refers to as 'expository units') submitting particular events to the wider political and military history of the PREC. In short, what seems to be suggested here is a distinction, within the corpus of documentary films on the Carnation Revolution, between those 'dramatic' narratives that became involved in events – at the risk of interfering, or even 'forging', its occurrence – and more detached approaches to the revolutionary process, in which pre-given narratives (and ideologies) would necessarily prescribe the meaning of events in advance (Costa 2007: 109).

In *Outro País/Another Country* (Sérgio Tréfaut, 2000), another documentary film about the documentary films made during the PREC, this time from the perspective of foreign filmmakers and photographers travelling to Portugal in 1974 and 1975, the origins and risks of these 'expository' narratives become very apparent. *Another Country* reflects less about film technique and the aesthetic and ideological problems posed by the relation between cinema and revolution than *Red Line*. Its aim is rather concerned with historical memory and in particular the urgency of collecting and archiving the immense corpus of images of the Carnation Revolution captured by foreign filmmakers and photographers. Most of these filmmakers and photographers came to Portugal searching for a unique opportunity to participate in a revolution. In the aftermath of the political engagement of the 1960s, and in particular with the defeat of the different forms of rebellion around 1968, the PREC was seen by many as a last chance to become involved in this type of event.

The motivations for this could be more strategic or personal, but were always deeply political. Swedish TV director Pea Holquist claims in Tréfaut's film that he came because 'these people were doing something' that he only knew from history books (about the Spanish Civil War, for instance). The story behind the production of *Setúbal, Ville Rouge* (Daniel Edinger and Michel Lequenne, 1976) is even more telling: as also told in Tréfaut's film, after careful planning on the form of participating in the revolution, the French Trotskyists of LCI (*Ligue communiste internationale*) eventually sent a film crew to make a film for international distribution.² Harlan himself, in an interview to *Another Country*, also recognized that *Torre Bela* was part of a wider movement to show the PREC outside of Portugal and hopefully inspire political struggles elsewhere.

The combination of political expectations (individual or collective) and the role these documentary films played in wider forms of political activism raises two main questions. On the one hand, these productions were instrumentally submitted to the strategic aims of political organizations. From the choice of topics (usually some grassroots form of activism) to aesthetics options (i.e. 'direct cinema' style and the use of voiceover), these films were invariably subsumed by political ideologies. However, on the other hand, these political ideologies themselves can be seen as a constitutive part of a long-lasting and world-wide political culture – that of communism and revolutionary traditions – that to a large extent permeated the forms of political struggle in the Carnation Revolution in the first place.³ In this sense, some of the films trying to give the broad picture of the PREC – by glancing over the different aspects of the struggle and/or the whole chronology of the political process – may be seen as more than just prescriptive impositions from some pre-established ideology on the course of events, as the events and the people participating in them already saw themselves as the protagonists of wider radical traditions.

It is thus fair to say that the problem *Torre Bela* raises is slightly different from the challenges presented by those films that went beyond the localized event – an aspect of the revolution, a specific moment, a specific place – and tried to encapsulate the whole of PREC within the temporal and narrative limits of the documentary form. These other films can be said to constitute a different category within the filmography of the Carnation Revolution. Their historical interest partly lies in the way in which they are closer to our initial narrative of the PREC, as syntheses of the whole revolutionary process. In some cases, like *As Armas e o Povo* (Colectivo de

Trabalhadores da Actividade Cinematográfica, 1975), a collective film made in the first week after the 25 April 1974, the structure is heavily dependent of the political and military narratives of TV journalism.

Other cases are more complex with regards to their filmic structure than these films in-between documentary cinema and TV journalism. Films like *Scenes from the Class Struggle in Portugal* (Robert Kramer, 1977)⁴ and *Bom Povo Português/The Good People of Portugal* (Rui Simões, 1981)⁵, for example, create a proper historical narrative by going beyond the emplotment of a specific event within the revolution and ultimately deploying the mechanisms of film language to simultaneously narrate and interpret, e.g. historicize, the revolution. Hence, after introducing the relation between film and revolution through films which have treated documentaries on the Revolution as historical sources – by reflecting on the filmic apparatus (*Red Line*) or historical memory (*Another Country*) – I will now turn to those films that more intensely engage with the historical process as such.

Revolution as Narrative

In both Kramer and Simões, the engagement with such a complex historical process involves a very intricate deployment of film techniques. Despite some important differences in their historical relation with the revolution – *Scenes* can be seen as an effort, by a North-American filmmaker, to insert the Portuguese Revolution in the international context of anti-imperialism; *The Good People of Portugal* as the coming to terms by the leftist director with his own defeat – both films follow the same basic strategy: to establish a contrast between the standard narratives of the political-military process and of grassroots class struggle. This contrast is what opens the historical event to the innumerable agents involved in the process and in its temporal continuum (no dates, no protagonists) in a deliberate effort to make the narrative more heterogeneous, with both political and aesthetic consequences. The constant juxtaposition of forms of struggle – occupations, assemblies, demonstrations, interviews – with the chronology of political dates not only complicates the traditional narrative of a revolution made by politicians and the armed forces, it actually endows a background to the dramatic narrative of the political process, a context that ultimately explains its instability (the frenzy of our initial narrative). In other words, more than opening the revolution's narrative to a different perspective, both films define it as class struggle, social mobilization and grassroots activism, of which the

armed forces and politicians would be either facilitators or adversaries, but always second-degree agents.

In these circumstances, it becomes very difficult to summarize the plot. We have two parallel lines in tension, the political-military process and the grassroots movement, sometimes collaborating in the development of the historical process, other times clashing with each other. And then there are all the other internal and external elements punctuating the narrative and affecting, when not indeed determining, its evolution. For instance, the films show the processes of African independence, especially in Angola and Mozambique, a determining factor in the emergence of the military movement and in the insertion of the revolution in the international context, as well as the significance of the rural north, permanently presented as still *another country*, and which is shown as an obstacle for a true national uprising, and indeed a setting for the counter-revolution, with the activism of the Catholic church, the arson attacks against Communist headquarters and other forms of right-wing terrorism. All these conflicting players will eventually ally with the broader context, with both Western Europe and the USA making pressure for democratic ‘normalization’ and the suspension of the socialist revolution. Finally, and returning to the beginning of the narratives – which, as such, work as spirals, with the constant return to the same agents and struggles evolving chronologically in a process of increasing dramatization – the action of political parties and the divisions inside the armed forces are shown to be strongly conditioned by all these contradictory forces.

The multiplicity of agents working in parallel suggests that montage was the only language able to render these stories. Both films, in this sense, are *virtuoso* exercises in editing. Sequences are permanently put in contrast, somehow juxtaposing negatively, either by developing a counter-narrative or directly deconstructing the plot of the master political history. But the range of resources used by both directors goes well beyond editing: the very diverse origins of footage (filmic and journalistic, colour and black and white, contemporary and archival, in good and bad condition) is apparent and becomes, in itself, an element of narrative instability. There are also interviews, photographs, intertitles, written documents and murals. Both films are thus visually elaborate, and the line of reasoning emerging from this intense exercise of montage is often convoluted.

And yet, despite this visual extravagancy, the most decisive way in which the narrative of the political-military history of the PREC is put under scrutiny is more

easily seen in the films' non-visual elements. In fact, both music and narration play decisive roles in the saturation of meaning. In *The Good People of Portugal*, for example, a vast range of musical traditions negotiate, non-diegetically, with the visual sequences, either by enhancing or breaking meaning. Narration is even more imposing, although it does not necessarily come as a compensation for any shortcoming in the visual aspects of both films. What it does is in a sense the opposite: rather than adding meaning, narration literally controls the radical openness of meaning conveyed by the images themselves. Either through the anti-imperialist pamphlet of *Scenes*, or the poetic lament of *The Good People of Portugal*, both texts situate those rebel images very rigorously in international politics and give them a stable place in history.

I would like to explore the paradox of narration in these films a bit further – in between narrative interference in the historical event and the guarantee that the latter emerges in its full complexity – by focusing in more detail in two sequences (one from each film) that will hopefully allow me to illustrate the role of contrasting elements in narrative. My key point here will be that narration, despite the inevitable normative power exerted by the voiceover, does not necessarily make the narratives linear and less critical. On the contrary, although the texts indeed fix meaning, they do so in order to prevent the frantic narrative of the revolution as chaos, or excess, to come forth as a random succession of events. The anti-fascist, anti-imperialist and anti-American charge of *Scenes*, and the dramatic epitaph of *The Good People of Portugal* are acutely ideological. What this means is that they read the struggle politically, which not only situates the films as participants in the events they narrate, but also grants the whole process a purpose: history, as a history of class struggles, is open rather than chaotic; the revolution is the moment when already existing contradictions come forth. The drama stems precisely from this openness to contradiction, as the expression of a precarious historical moment that is kept undetermined at least as long winners and losers are undecided and the narrative can finally come to a closure.

The opening of *Scenes* and the moment when the closure of the narrative, and of the political process, is declared in *The Good People of Portugal*, show how these filmic narratives are completely immersed in history in a sense that goes well beyond ideological positions and political activism. For what they do is to absorb a narrative structure that was somehow already present in the event itself. In this sense, *Scenes*

starts by establishing the film's programme, its own context of production. But contrary to what one would expect from a film with radical ideas and a well-defined ideological world-view, the text is tentative, presenting its making as a method, rather than a doctrine, and opening itself to an exploration of reality that coincides with the experimental visual aspects of the film. Portugal and the revolution are still absent from this initial sequence. All we see is just the film, that is, the planning and the makers: a typed page in a typewriter, photos of the directors, and a list where one can read different topics, many of them arranged in pairs, as if everything could only exist, or make sense, in its diversity and contradiction: 'Events/History; Facts/Principles; Actuality/Potentiality; Friends/Classes; Words/Images; Music; National Liberation; Proletariat; Potential; Love.' The initial plan, it seems, was nothing but a commitment to history, the openness to an ongoing process and to the variety of materials, to the proliferation of discourses, an engagement and coming to terms with the singular nature of the historical event (cf. Brom 1976, 29-30).

The parallel between the films' plots and the historical event reaches its peak in the decisive moment of the narrative of *The Good People of Portugal* when, during the 'Hot Summer' of 1975, the first signs of counter-revolution start to loom large. Two scenes mark this moment. In the first scene, Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves tries to convince his soldiers to keep their commitment to the revolutionary process. In the second, the dramatic voiceover – by José Mário Branco⁶ – declares that, because the revolution is heading to its conclusion, the film also has to end:

Vasco Gonçalves: 'In my opinion, the historical experience we are living is a moment we can compare to 1820, to 1836, to 1910. Those were dates when promises of a better life opened up to the Portuguese people. And those promises were deceived. Well now, it's a duty of honour for the MFA and all other progressive and patriotic forces in our country not to allow that hope to be tarnished, so that this time we won't lose our future. We need to be conscious of the moment we are living. *This is a historical moment (...). We need to be conscious that, as the makers of our future, we know what steps have to be taken (...).*'

Narrator (José Mário Branco): 'PS [the Socialist Party], in an anti-communist campaign, brings several classes together for the ideological, not class, struggle. Pinheiro de Azevedo [conservative prime-minister, who replaced

Vasco Gonçalves during the Summer of 1975] is sung, pamphleteered, used by PS. *Nineteenth-century overcoming the twentieth. This is the moment when the closure of the film is decided. The closure of this history, this movement.* (my emphasis)

Both sets of discourse show us how the film was the history of an event acutely aware of its place in history. With Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves encouraging his soldiers to make history, on the one hand, and the film establishing the closure of the social revolution – the revolution that would transform Portuguese society – at the moment of its political defeat, on the other, *The Good People of Portugal* (in this sense similar to *Scenes*) absorbs the event's historicity and declares its closure as defeat.

The explanations come next, in 20 long minutes of downfall: we see the action of the Catholic Church and political terrorism in the conservative North, the return of African settlers, the re-emergence of police violence, the right-wing turn of the government and the armed forces. Mass political participation and the daily transformation of Portuguese society suddenly disappear, subsumed under the master chronology of political history. Interestingly, it can at this stage be suggested that it is precisely when the voiceover ceases to interfere that the films lose their 'ability to say the situation, to fictionalize it' (Rancière 2012: 21). In other words, in both Kramer and Simões, narration can be seen as what countered the master narrative of the revolution, opening space for alternative versions of the PREC to emerge and short-circuiting the power of dominant political and military history to stand on its own.

Which brings us to our last question: where was the grassroots revolutionary process defeated? Was it in the revolutionary process or in these filmic narratives? In both, of course, but one is left wondering whether another narrative would have been possible, one more resistant to the political forms these films tried to criticize but to whose logic of power, breaks and protagonists they ended up submitting to. In other words, would it be possible to think of a narrative based on the continuities, permanence and deep change of the social movement? This was probably easier in those films focusing on localized events (but, as José Filipe Costa shows in relation to *Torre Bela*, even there the story ends in defeat). In the case of the wide syntheses of the revolutionary process like *Scenes from the Class Struggle in Portugal* and *The Good People of Portugal*, the task was more difficult. For if, on the one hand, these films managed to criticize the dominant history of the political-military process and

our initial image of chaos and excess, on the other hand they did not avoid following its temporality. In between the fictional historicization of the films – of how the narratives tried to change the history of the revolution – and the filmic narrative of political history – the way the winners of the revolution imposed their specific version – the latter seemed to have prevailed. And yet, recent film analyses of the memory of the New State dictatorship and the Carnation Revolution – such as *Red Line* and *Another Country* – have proved decisive in keeping the images of the past open to new meanings and interpretations.

Notes

¹ A recent, although unfortunately quite biased, effort to do this was recently authored by Raquel Varela (2014).

² In *An Impatient Life*, Daniel Bensaid (2013) gives some details of the political plans and preparation of what would become *Setúbal, Ville Rouge*.

³ The struggles within the Carnation Revolution may in this sense be seen as part of the wider history of communism made of discourses and narratives, or, in the words of Fredric Jameson, an ‘eternity of debate and discord, the perpetual present of ideological passion and politicized consciousness’ (2005: xxvi).

⁴ Raquel Schefer offers a good survey of Kramer’s work, and the role of *Scenes of Class Struggle in Portugal* in it, in “The Lived Cinema of Robert Kramer: Politics and Subjectivity”, *La Furia Umana* 16, April 2013.

⁵ The most comprehensive study about Rui Simões and *Bom Povo Português* is Mickaël Robert-Gonçalves’s *Bon peuple portugais de Rui Simões (1980): Histoire et esthétique d’un film-révolution*, mémoire de Master, Université Paris 1: Panthéon Sorbonne, 2010.

⁶ José Mário Branco is a Portuguese musician best known for his political activism. He is seen as the key voice in *música de intervenção* (‘intervention music’), a genre of popular music that addresses social and political problems. Exiled in France since 1963 after being persecuted by the New State’s political police, Branco returned to Portugal in 1974, and was an important voice during the PREC.